



ORAL FITNESS FACT SHEET

Choose Your Weapon - Mouth Rinse

Can I just rinse?

A mouth rinse is not a substitute for good oral hygiene. The American Dental Association recommends regular brushing and flossing as the best defense against cavities and gum disease.

Do I need to use a mouth rinse?

Mouth rinses can freshen breath for up to three hours and help remove food particles from the mouth. Most people do not need to use a rinse regularly unless they have an oral problem. Bad breath or unpleasant taste can be a sign of gum disease, cavities, or some other problem. Ask your dentist if you think you might benefit from using a mouth rinse. If you have a more severe problem such as multiple cavities, gum disease, xerostomia (dry mouth), or halitosis (bad breath), your dentist may prescribe a special rinse for you. Otherwise, they may recommend that you use an over-the-counter (OTC) rinse.

Over-the-counter (OTC) Rinses	Functions	Ingredients
Anti-bacterial Rinses Antiseptic Rinses Examples: Listerine or equivalent brands Enzymatic Rinses Examples: Biotene or equivalent brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents and reduces plaque and bacteria (germs), even between teeth Prevents and reduces gingivitis (bleeding gums) and gum disease Natural enzymes fight bacteria Moisturizes dry mouth Protects sore mouth tissues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thymol, Eucalyptol, Menthol, and Methylsalicylate 22% Alcohol (or more) Benzoic or boric acid Lysozyme, Lactoferrin Glucose Oxidase Lactoperoxidase
Anti-cavity Rinses Examples: ACT, Fluorigard, Oral B Anti-cavity Rinse, or equivalent brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent cavities Blocks bacterial acid production Strengthens weakened areas of the teeth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> .05% Sodium Fluoride
Other Rinses Examples: Scope, Cepacol, Signal, Lavoris, or equivalent brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily mask bad breath Help remove oral debris before or after brushing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14-15% Alcohol Astringents (zinc chloride)
Homemade Rinses	Functions	Ingredients
Salt Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aid healing Soothe sore mouth tissues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ tsp. of salt 8 oz. of water
Sodium Bicarbonate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutralize acid reflux (stomach acid) Freshen breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ tsp. of baking soda 8 oz. water

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Using mouth rinses correctly

Children under the age of six should not use mouthwashes. They have trouble controlling their swallowing reflex. Older children who use a rinse should be supervised by an adult.

Take the proper amount of liquid as directed by the dentist or on the bottle. With your mouth closed, swish the front and sides of your mouth forcefully using your tongue and cheeks for 30 seconds. For fluoride rinses swish for one minute. Do not swallow the mouth rinse. Spit it out.



Side effects of rinses

Routine or excessive use of antiseptic mouth rinses may cause:

- A burning sensation in the cheeks, teeth, and gums.
- Painful ulcers, soreness, or numbness

